



Press Release

For Release

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Crime in Centralia - Violent Crime Continues to Rise

"While the violence associated with gang activity in our community lessened in 2008, violent crime nonetheless continued to increase in 2008. This trend is disturbing given the gains in crime reduction we had achieved from 2005 through 2007" Chief Bob Berg stated as he released the preliminary 2008 crime statistics for the City of Centralia. The overall crime rate in Centralia increased by 4.4%, 2008 compared to 2007, with property crime up 3.7% and violent crime up 9.1%. "In 2007 our city experienced the highest number of violent crimes recorded. Unfortunately we surpassed that record in 2008."

In figures forwarded to the Washington State Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) for inclusion in their annual report on crime in Washington State, Centralia reported 1,145 index crimes in 2008, up from the 1,097 crimes in 2007 but still well below the reported 1,582 crimes in 2004, the highest number of index crimes reported in city history. The Centralia Police Department participates in the WASPC Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program and has submitted such reports to the FBI for years. The UCR program identifies and reports on specific crimes, reported in a uniform way, as a measure of the criminal activity occurring in cities, counties, and states throughout the nation. Violent crimes under this reporting system consist of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes include burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

While the overall crime rate increased 4.4% for the year, violent crime (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) was up by 9.1 % from 2007 (a year in which an increase of 28.5% was experienced compared to 2006). There were 108 such incidents in Centralia in 2008 compared with 99 in the previous year and 77 in 2006. Property crime in Centralia was up less than 3.9%, 2008 compared to 2007.

"While we were somewhat successful in dealing with gang activity to the point of experiencing only one drive by shooting in 2008 as oppose to seven in 2007, nonetheless the rate of violent crime in our community is far too high." Berg said.

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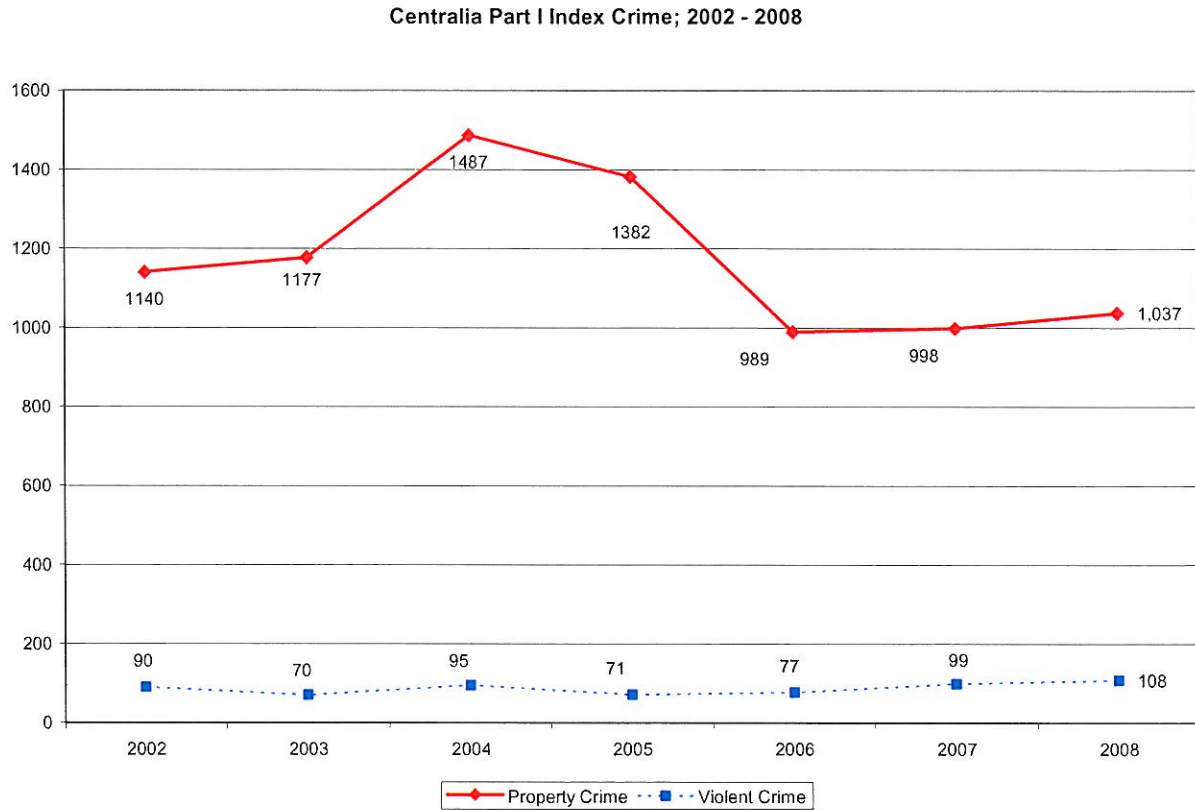
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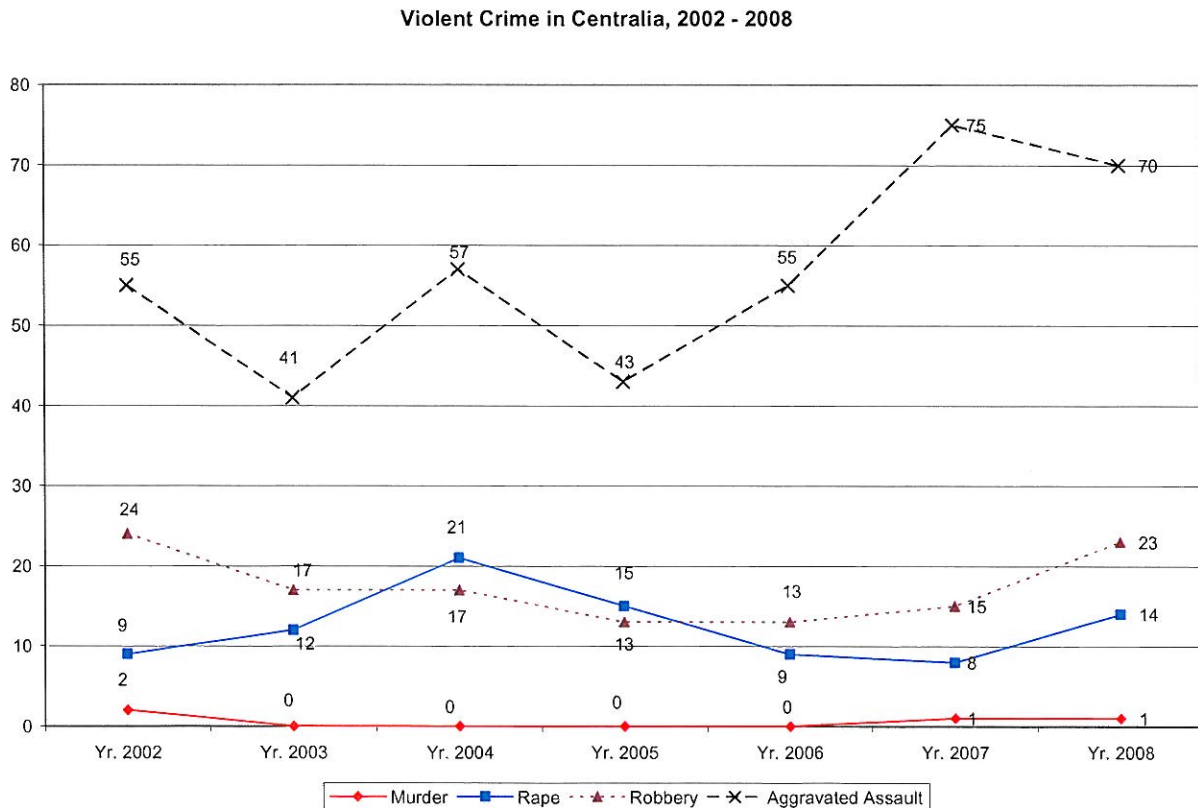
Our Mission

Work in partnership with our community to protect life and property, reduce crime, and enhance the security and quality of life in our city.

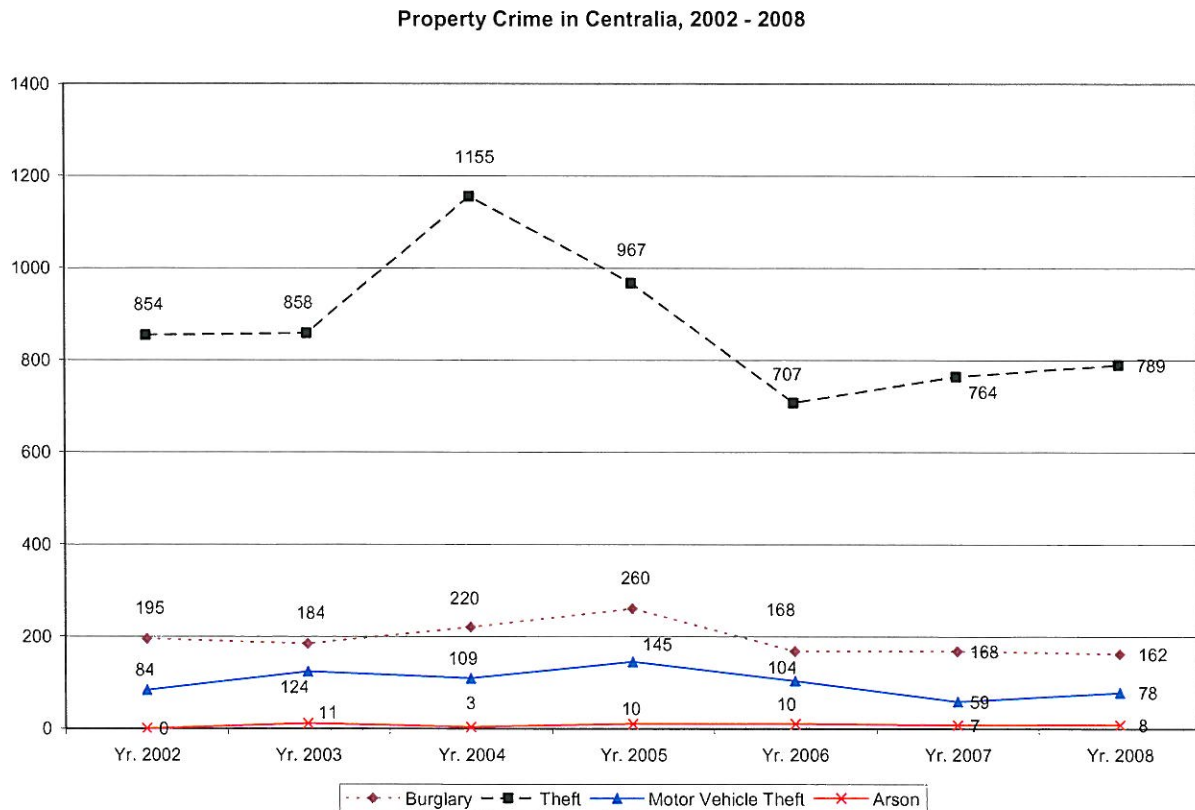
The following chart depicts the overall number of "Index Crimes" committed in our community since 2002:



The next chart depicts the violent crime incidents in our community since 2002:



The next chart depicts property crime incidents over the same 7 year period:



Crimes up in 2008 compared to 2007 included rape (plus 6), robbery (plus 6), theft (plus 25), auto theft (plus 17) and arson (plus 1). Crimes that were down in 2008 included aggravated assault (minus 5) and burglary (minus 7). Murder and Non negligent manslaughter remained the same with one incident in 2008.

In terms of our community and its 15,540 residents, these statistics translate to the following: In 2008 (2007 shown in parenthesis):

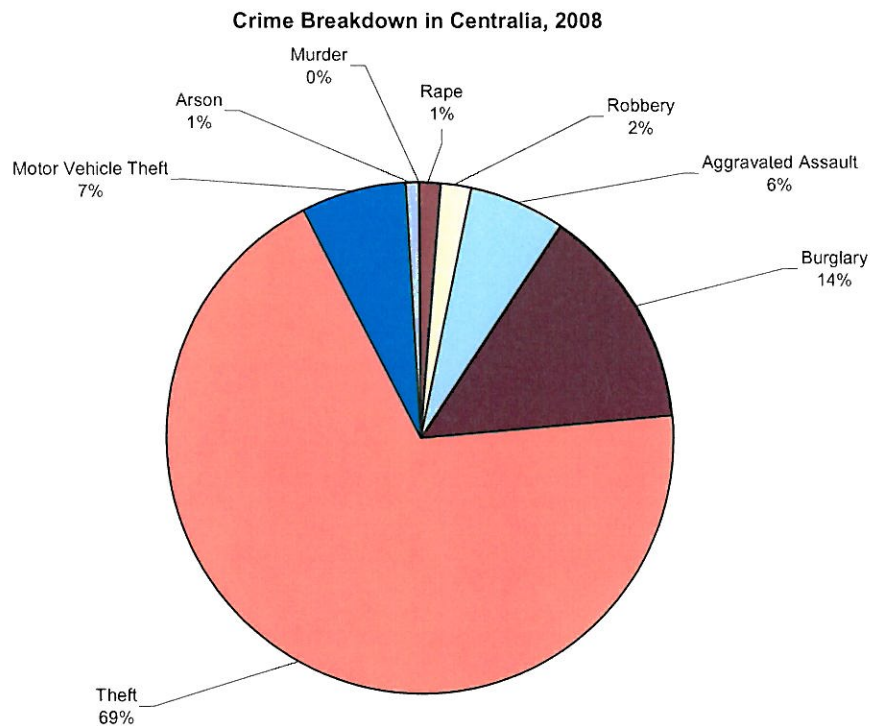
- Two thefts occurred each day (2007 same)
- One burglary occurred every 2½ days (2007 same)
- One vehicle was stolen every five days (2007 - one vehicle theft per week)
- An aggravated assault occurred every 5 days (2007 - same)
- A rape occurred every 26 days (2007 – every 45 days)
- A robbery occurred every 16 days (2007 – every 24 days)
- An arson occurred about once every 46 days (2007 – every 52 days)
- There was one murder in our community in 2008

From a personal security perspective, our community remains a safe place to live. The statistical probability of a Centralia resident being the victim of a violent crime in 2008 was approximately 7/10^{ths} of 1% (about 1 in 144), up 1/10th of 1% from 2007 (about 1 in 160), or 6.96 per 1,000 residents in 2007 (6.38 per 1,000 in 2007). For property crime,

the 2008 rate was 66.82 per 1,000 residents (up from 64.30 per 1,000 in 2007). The chances of being the victim of a property crime in Centralia were 6.67% in 2008 (up from 6.43% in 2007). The overall crime rate for our community in 2008 was 73.78 crimes per one thousand residents, compared with

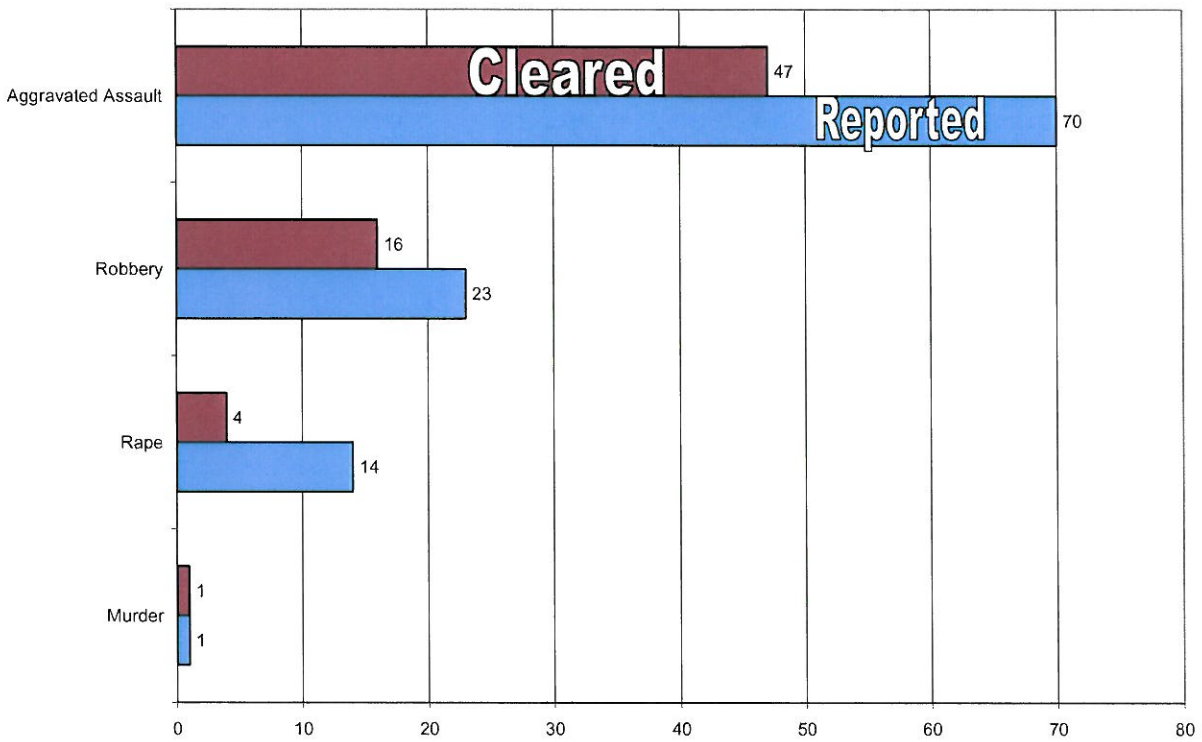
- 70.68 per 1,000 in 2007
- 68.33 per 1,000 in 2006
- 94.35 per 1,000 in 2005.

The following chart depicts the breakdown of violent crime and property crime in Centralia in 2006:

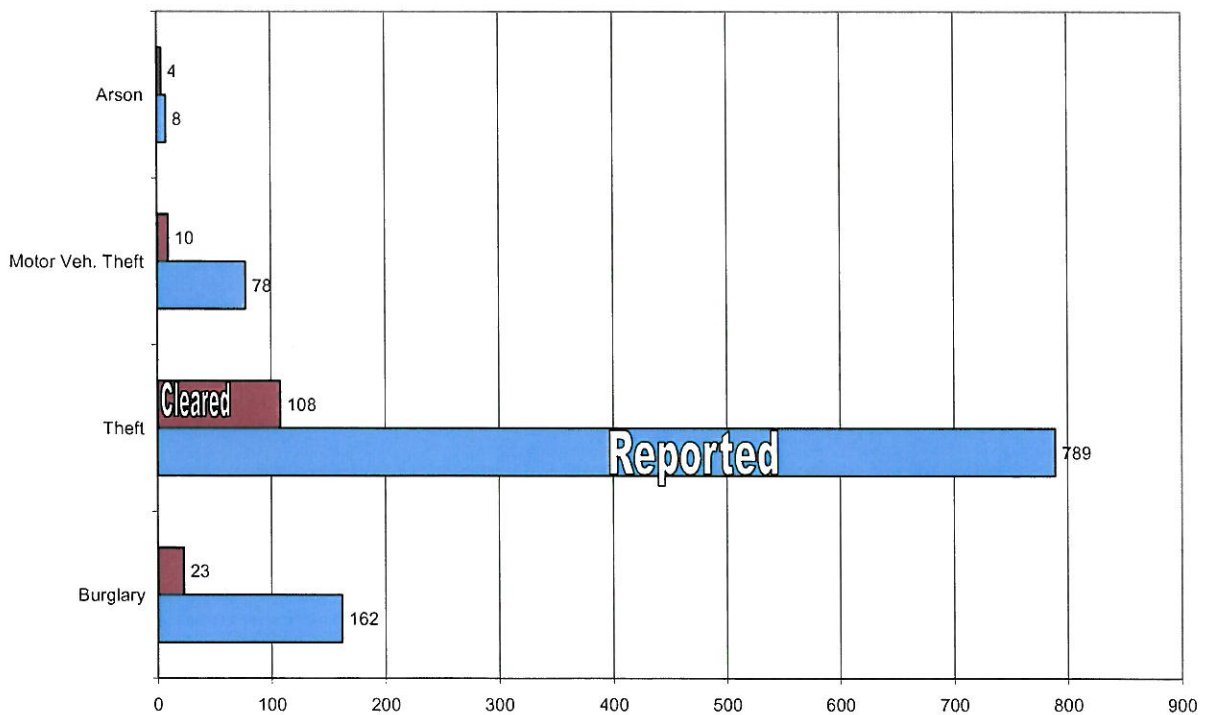


The department's clearance rate for all index crimes in 2008 was 18.6%, a 3.7% increase from our 14.9% clearance rate in 2007. Our clearance rate for violent crimes in 2008 was 63% and our clearance rate on property crimes was 14%.

Violent Crime Clearance Rate, 2008



Property Crime Clearance Rate, 2008



Berg concluded "The police department continues to undertake specialized crime reduction techniques, including the use of our crime prevention specialists, the use of a school resource officer in partnership with the Centralia School District, our anti-crime team, a traffic unit, and our traditional detective and patrol divisions. Unfortunately due to staff shortages, we have been required to suspend the operations of our traffic team as well as our anti-crime team to cover shortages in our patrol division. We hope to resume those operations in May.

"We continue to work cooperatively with surrounding law enforcement agencies, and work with neighborhood groups to address the challenges of drugs and crime. We ask for the public's assistance in making our community a safe place to live, work, and play. Preventing crime is a community responsibility. Please protect yourself, secure your homes and vehicles, don't leave your keys in your vehicle, and be sure to keep valuables out of sight if you leave them in your car. Be a good neighbor, and report suspicious activity to your police department."